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## LETTER BOX CURIOS.

### Strange Things Entrusted to the United States Mails.

Those That Are Unavailable Are Deposited in the Storage Room of the Inquiry Division—A Place of Rare Interest.

(Special Chicago Letter.)

Of course people try to send live frogs and toads and strawberry jam and such things through the mails. But Uncle Sam objects. That's why there's an inquiry division in the Chicago post office. It was for the purpose of intercepting the unavailable matter and rectifying odd blunders that the department was inaugurated. The storage room with its vast array of merchandise of all descriptions resembles a curiosity shop more than anything else. All kinds of articles, some improperly directed and some unavailable, are stored away there. I have always been interested in this



NEVER REACHED THEIR DESTINATION.

department and at various times have gone through it, and frequently have taken an inventory of the unique things that have found their way there. I have seen a set of false teeth, neatly done up in a package bearing no address, awaiting identification. Near by were a couple of fret saws, a wig for an actor, a pair of hair switches, a Kansas grasshopper, a pretzel attached to a tag directed to somebody in New York, a can of soft soap, a box of red pepper, grapes, candies, toys and almost everything imaginable. Among the unavailable matter I once saw a piece of wedding cake, presumably sent to some friend to dream upon. One inoffensive-looking little parcel contained a piece of pie addressed to an employee at the city hall. He was duly notified that such a package awaited his orders, but he evidently did not care for pie, as he never called for it.

Another package had printed on the top of it: "This side up with care, ink." The sender evidently took the United States mail service for an express company. Sometimes there seems to be method in the madness of those who are bent on evading the postal regulations. Not long ago a loaded six-shooter was intercepted, and the next day a box of cartridges was sent on by the same person. It keeps the superintendent and his assistants pretty busy attending to the unavailable articles, but this is only a part of the business. Although the people have learned to be more careful in the transmission of mail matter, and are better informed in regard to the rules regulating this branch of the service, queer mistakes happen very frequently. In addition to intercepting the unavailable articles the inquiry department is expected to untangle all the snarls and rectify all the blunders that come into the post office. Some of these blunders are amusing.

Not long ago an unstamped letter was found in the city drop. It was



ALIVE AND KICKING.

sent to the inquiry department. A few hours later a nickel pasted to a piece of cardboard was found in the mailing box. On the cardboard was written:

I MAILED A LETTER WITHOUT A STAMP KEP THE CHANG

The nickel was also sent to the inquiry office, where a two-cent stamp was put on the unstamped letter and the balance of the money applied to the United States sinking fund.

On one occasion a child's book was received. It had been sent as merchandise, but on the fly leaf a girl's name had been written, which is contrary to the postal regulations, and it was therefore held. At the bottom of the first page was also written: "Look on page 129." Turning to the page indicated the clerk found a crisp two-dollar bill.

Sometimes things get a little mixed up by the employees of the post office, but not often, for the positions of the clerks depend upon their correctness. However, an error now and then does

## FARMER AND PLANTER.

### OUR COUNTRY ROADS.

The True Remedy for the Present Unsatisfactory Dirt Roads in Good Macadam.

The average country road, as at present maintained and repaired, is a constant source of unnecessary expense to taxpayers and an almost constant vexation to travelers. At its best the dirt road is good for only a few months in the year, and those months the time when the farmer—the man most interested in good country roads—is using his horses on the farm. In the fall, winter, and early spring, when the great bulk of teaming is to be done, the roads are in bad shape, except when kind Providence sends a snow that makes "good sledding." Bad roads mean small loads, and small loads mean to the farmer proportionately small profits. I know many farmers where the saving in time from hauling the saving in wear and the saving in horseflesh, wagons and harness would over and over again pay for the increased initial cost of a good macadam road. Made of the best dirt obtainable, applied under intelligent supervision, and kept in order with proper road-making tools, the dirt road is never entirely satisfactory. What can be expected of the quality of roads made of the material most easily obtained, applied by men ignorant of the first principles of road making, working without proper tools, and supervised by men equally ignorant, or not at all? The true remedy for poor dirt roads is good macadam. But with no greater expenditure of money than now, the present road might be vastly improved. The road tax should be paid in cash. The system of loaning out the tax, under the pretense of "working the roads," should be abolished. This money should be expended under the immediate supervision of one man for each township, selected for a knowledge of road making, and put under bonds for the faithful performance of his duties. This would introduce into the system the element of responsibility, which is sadly lacking at present, and to the lack of which are due many of the abuses of the present methods. One man, hiring his labor where he pleased, and paying cash for a day's work, would get considerably more done for the money than a dozen or 15 roadmasters working out the tax in conjunction with their neighbors and fellow farmers.

Proper tools should be provided to work with. Road scrapers are almost unknown in many country districts, and plows and shovels are the tools most commonly used. Very good road scrapers can be bought for only two or three times the cost of a good plow, and two men, two horses, and a road scraper will do the work of an equal number of horses and ten men, with plows and shovels, and do it better. Only the best obtainable materials should be used in repairing the roads, gravel, when possible, and when not, the dirt most nearly approaching it in quality. The use of "gutter wash," suds, and stones larger than two inches in diameter, should be forbidden. I have seen roads "mended" with suds, that were for weeks impassable at any gait faster than a walk, and I have seen holes in the road bed filled with large stones that were a nuisance for years.

The roads should be worked at proper times. The need of the dirt road is little repair often made. The common practice is to do almost all the work just after "boom planting." This is wrong for two reasons: It is too late for the best results, and too much is done at one time. Six inches of dirt or gravel will make a far better road if put on in layers of, say two inches at intervals of a month or so, than will the entire quantity applied at once. Just as soon as the roads are settled in the spring, and before they have become dry and hard, the scraper should be put to work leveling and filling the ruts that were worn during the winter, and slightly rounding the roadbed towards the center. The ground being still moist, and not compact, as it is at the usual time of doing this, the work can be done more easily and rapidly and the road will pack better. Later a light coat of earth or gravel should be applied to be followed by another when the first becomes packed hard, and this in turn by a third if possible. Lastly, in the fall the entire road should be given over to see that all gutters and bridges are free, that the road may not be washed out by winter storms and spring rains. All mud holes, of course, should be filled promptly at all times, so that no water may stand in the road, and loose stones should be removed at least once a month. The usual time for cutting brush along roads, August, seems right, but some reform is needed in the way of doing it. The brush should be cut close down to the ground, and not, as often is the case, cut a foot or more above it, leaving long unsightly stubs to sprout the ensuing spring. It should be piled at once, and burned when sufficiently dry. Under the present system I have seen brush cut, left out, the next year's growth cut over top of that, and the resulting tangle abandoned the third year.

With some such system as this I have sketched, the application to the road work of the business rules which govern every progressive farmer in the conduct of his farm, with the work done under the supervision of a responsible man, done at the proper times, instead of whenever convenient, with the proper tools and with a proper quality of earth, by men who were compelled to give a day's work for a day's pay, the dirt road could be made not good, but vastly better than it is. But the dirt road is a costly one to repair. Its only redeeming feature is its comparative initial cheapness, and in



RETURNING STOLEN PROPERTY.

and easy. It consists of dropping a purse or other stolen article, after, of course, denouncing it of all suspicion of money, in the nearest mail box. The inquiry division does the rest. It is by no means an uncommon occurrence for the mail collectors to gather up wallets and packages of papers that have been dropped in the boxes by thieves. Sometimes the addresses are attached and the articles are at once returned to the owners. If there is no clue as to the ownership they are held subject to future developments.

A short time ago one of the collectors brought in a money order that he found loose in a box in Canal street. It was issued in New York and drawn on a post office in the state of Washington. The department here wrote on to the postmaster there, and when the answer came back a strange tale was unfolded. It appears that the man who remitted the order was also the payee. That is, he had drawn the order, which was for a considerable sum, while he was in New York, and made it payable to himself in his native western town as a safe way of transmitting the cash across the continent. While in Chicago he was sandbagged and robbed. The thing saw the money order was of no use to him, so he dropped it in the letter box. The western postmaster wrote that he believed the man's story, for the reason that his face bore every evidence that he had been assaulted. Another victim to a robbery whose pocketbook was returned to him by the inquiry department, wrote to the officials:

"I feel very grateful to you, and just a little to the devil, who must have prompted the fellow who robbed me to throw the purse into the mail box."

FREDERICK ROYD STEVENSON.

Safeguards.

"The cashier informed me," said the president, "that he was strongly tempted to skip with the funds, but that he locked himself up with them and prayed over them all night and overcame the temptation."

"I know it," said the chief director. "I had a detective at his door, one at each window, and one on the roof—at the chimney flue—while he was praying—At a Constitution."

Must Have Left Some.

Billings—I understand that many of the vultures in Cuba perished during the war?

Bullette—Probably they did. In the boys didn't eat all the embalmed beef.

—N. Y. World.

Chances.

Every man has brilliant chances. As he journeys on life's way. But he generally sees them. Looking back on yesterday.

—Chicago Daily News.

## AN ETERNAL GLOOM.

### Dr. Talmage Pictures the Earth Without the Gospel.

Vividly Portrays the Gloom of an Ideal World—Triumph of Atheism Would Mean Death of Civilization.

Copyright, Louis Klopsch, 1899.]

[Washington.]

In this sermon Dr. Talmage gives a glimpse of what the world would be if the Gospel were abolished and the human race left without Divine guidance. The text is Acts 2:20: "The sun shall be turned into darkness."

Christianity is the rising sun of our time, and men have tried with the up-rolling vapors of skepticism and the smoke of their blasphemy to turn the sun into darkness. Suppose the archangels of malice and horror should be let loose a little while and be allowed to extinguish and destroy the sun in the natural heavens? They would take the oceans from other worlds and pour them on the luminary of the planetary system, and the waters gushing down amid the ravines and the caverns, and there is explosion after explosion, until there are only a few peaks of fire left in the sun, and these are cooling down and going out until the vast continents of flame are reduced to a small acreage of fire, and that whitens and cools off until there are only a few coals left, and these are whitening and going out until there is not a speck left in all the mountains of ashes and the valleys of ashes and the chasms of ashes. A burning sun! A dead sun! A buried sun! Let all worlds wait at the stupendous obsequies.

Of course this withdrawal of the solar light and heat throws our earth into a universal chill, and the tropics become the temperate, and the temperate becomes the arctic, and there are frozen rivers and frozen lakes and frozen oceans. From arctic and antarctic regions the inhabitants gather in toward the center and find the equator as the poles. The slain forests are piled up into a great bonfire, and around them gather the shivering villages and cities. The wealth of the coal mines is hastily poured into the furnaces and stirred into rage of combustion, but soon the bonfires begin to lower, and the furnaces begin to go out, and the nations begin to die. Colopoli, Yousin, Etna, Stromboli, California geysers, cease to smoke, and the ice of hailstorms remains unmelting in their crater. All the flowers have breathed their last breath. Ships with sailors frozen at the mast, and helmsmen frozen at the wheel, all nations dying, first at the north and then at the south. Child frosted and dead in the cradle. Octogenarian frosted and dead at the hearth. Workmen with frozen hands on the hammer and frozen foot on the shuttle. Winter from sea to sea. All congealing winter. Perpetual winter. Globe of frigid. Hemisphere shackled to hemisphere by chains of ice. Universal Nova Zembla. The earth an ice floe grinding against other ice floes. The archangels of malice and horror have done their work, and now they may take their thrones of gloom and look down upon the ruin they have wrought. What the destruction of the sun in the natural heavens would be to our physical earth, the destruction of Christianity would be to the moral world. The sun turned into darkness!

Infidelity in our time is considered a great joke. There are people who rejoice to hear Christianity caricatured and to hear Christ assailed with quibble and quirk and misrepresentation and badinage and harlequinade. I propose to-day to take infidelity and atheism out of the realm of jocularity into one of tragedy and show you what infidelity propose and what if they are successful they will accomplish. There are those in our communities who would like to see the Christian religion overthrown and who say the world would be better without it. I want to show you what is the end of this road and what is the terminus of this crusade and what this world will be when atheism and infidelity have triumphed over it, if they can. I say, if they can. I reiterate it, if they can.

In the first place, it will be the complete and unutterable degradation of womanhood. I will prove it by facts and arguments which no honest man will dispute. In all communities and cities and states and nations where the Christian religion has been dominant woman's condition has been ameliorated and improved, and she is deferred to and honored in a thousand things, and every gentleman takes off his hat before her. If your associations have been good, you know that the name of wife, mother, daughter, suggests gracious surroundings. You know there are no better schools and seminaries in this country than the schools and seminaries for our young ladies. You know that while woman may suffer in justice in England and the United States she has more of her rights in Christendom than she has anywhere else.

Now, compare this with woman's condition in lands where Christianity has made little or no advance—in China, in Barbary, in Borneo, in Tartary, in Egypt, in Hindustan. The Burmese sell their wives and daughters as so many sheep. The Hindoo Bible makes it disgraceful and an outrage for a woman to listen to music or look out of the window in the absence of her husband and gives as a lawful ground for divorce a woman's beginning to eat before her husband has finished his meal. What mean those white bundles on the ponds and rivers in China in the morning? Infanticide following infanticide. Female children destroyed simply because they are female. Woman harnessed to the plow as an ox. Woman veiled and barricaded in all styles of cruel seclusion. Her birth a misfortune. Her

life a torture. Her death a horror. The missionary of the cross to-day in heathen lands preaches generally to two groups—a group of men who do as they please and sit where they please; the other group, women hidden and carefully secluded in a side apartment, where they may hear the voice of the preacher, but may not be seen. No reform. No liberty. No hope for this life. No hope for the life to come. Ringed nose. Cramped foot. Disfigured face. Embruted soul. Now, compare those two conditions. How far toward this latter condition that I speak of would a woman go if Christian influences were withdrawn and Christianity destroyed? It is only a question of dynamics. If an object be lifted to a certain point and not fastened there and the lifting power be withdrawn, how long before that object will fall down to the point from which it started? It will fall down, and it will go still farther than the point from which it started. Christianity has lifted woman up from the very depths of degradation almost to the skies. If that lifting power be withdrawn she falls back to the depth from which she was resurrected, not going any lower, because there is no lower depth. And yet, notwithstanding the fact that the only salvation of woman from degradation and woe is the Christian religion—and the only influence that has ever lifted her in the social scale is Christianity—I have heard that there are women who reject Christianity. I make no remark in regard to those persons. In the silence of your own soul make your observations.

If infidelity triumph and Christianity be overthrown, it means the demoralization of society. The one idea in the Bible that atheists and infidels most hate is the idea of retribution. Take away the idea of retribution and punishment from society, and it will begin very soon to disintegrate, and take away from the minds of men the fear of hell, and there are a great many of them who would very soon turn this world into a hell. The majority of those who are indignant because of the idea of punishment are men whose lives are bad or whose hearts are impure and who hate the Bible because of the idea of future punishment for the same reason that criminals hate the penitentiary. Oh, I have heard this brave talk about people fearing nothing of the consequences of sin in the next world, and I have made up my mind it is merely a coward's whistling to keep his courage up. I have seen men flaunt their immoralities in the face of the community, and I have heard them defy the judgment day and scoff at the idea of any future consequence of their sin, but when they came to die they shrieked until you could hear them for nearly two blocks, and in the summer night the neighbors got up to put the windows down because they could not endure the horror.

I would not want to see a rail train with 500 Christian people on board go down through a drawbridge into a watery grave; I would not want to see 500 Christian people go into such disaster, but I tell you plainly that I could more easily see that than I could for any protracted time stand and see an infidel die, though his pillow were of elder down and under a canopy of vermillion. I have never been able to brace up my nerves for such a spectacle. There is something at such a time so indescribable in the countenance. I just looked in upon it a minute or two, but the clutch of his fist was so diabolic and the strength of his voice was so unnatural I could not endure it.

"There is no hell, there is no hell, there is no hell!" the man had said for 60 years, but that night when I looked in the dying room of my infidel neighbor there was something on his countenance which seemed to say: "There is, there is, there is, there is!" The mightiest restraints to-day against theft, against immorality, against libertinism, against crime of all sorts—the mightiest restraints are the retributions of eternity. Men know that they can escape the law, but down in the offenders' soul there is the realization of the fact that they cannot escape God. He stands at the end of the road of profligacy, and He will not clear the guilty. Take all idea of retribution and punishment out of the hearts and minds of men, and it would not be long before our cities would become Sodom.

The only restraints against the evil passions of the world to-day are Bible restraints. Suppose now these generals of atheism and infidelity got the victory, and suppose they marshaled a great army made up of the majority of the world. They are in companies, in regiments, in brigades—the whole army. Forward, march, ye hosts of infidels and atheists, banners flying before, banners flying behind, banners inscribed with the words: "No God! No Christ! No Punishment! No Restraints! Down with the Bible! Do as You Please!" The sun turned into darkness!

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I would not want to see a rail train with 500 Christian people on board go down through a drawbridge into a watery grave; I would not want to see 500 Christian people go into such disaster, but I tell you plainly that I could more easily see that than I could for any protracted time stand and see an infidel die, though his pillow were of elder down and under a canopy of vermillion. I have never been able to brace up my nerves for such a spectacle. There is something at such a time so indescribable in the countenance. I just looked in upon it a minute or two, but the clutch of his fist was so diabolic and the strength of his voice was so unnatural I could not endure it.

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If infidelity triumph and Christianity be overthrown, it means the demoralization of society. The one idea in the Bible that atheists and infidels most hate is the idea of retribution. Take away the idea of retribution and punishment from society, and it will begin very soon to disintegrate, and take away from the minds of men the fear of hell, and there are a great many of them who would very soon turn this world into a hell. The majority of those who are indignant because of the idea of punishment are men whose lives are bad or whose hearts are impure and who hate the Bible because of the idea of future punishment for the same reason that criminals hate the penitentiary. Oh, I have heard this brave talk about people fearing nothing of the consequences of sin in the next world, and I have made up my mind it is merely a coward's whistling to keep his courage up. I have seen men flaunt their immoralities in the face of the community, and I have heard them defy the judgment day and scoff at the idea of any future consequence of their sin, but when they came to die they shrieked until you could hear them for nearly two blocks, and in the summer night the neighbors got up to put the windows down because they could not endure the horror.

I would not want to see a rail train with 500 Christian people on board go down through a drawbridge into a watery grave; I would not want to see 500 Christian people go into such disaster, but I tell you plainly that I could more easily see that than I could for any protracted time stand and see an infidel die, though his pillow were of elder down and under a canopy of vermillion. I have never been able to brace up my nerves for such a spectacle. There is something at such a time so indescribable in the countenance. I just looked in upon it a minute or two, but the clutch of his fist was so diabolic and the strength of his voice was so unnatural I could not endure it.

"There is no hell, there is no hell, there is no hell!" the man had said for 60 years, but that night when I looked in the dying room of my infidel neighbor there was something on his countenance which seemed to say: "There is, there is, there is, there is!" The mightiest restraints to-day against theft, against immorality, against libertinism, against crime of all sorts—the mightiest restraints are the retributions of eternity. Men know that they can escape the law, but down in the offenders' soul there is the realization of the fact that they cannot escape God. He stands at the end of the road of profligacy, and He will not clear the guilty. Take all idea of retribution and punishment out of the hearts and minds of men, and it would not be long before our cities would become Sodom.

The only restraints against the evil passions of the world to-day are Bible restraints. Suppose now these generals of atheism and infidelity got the victory, and suppose they marshaled a great army made up of the majority of the world. They are in companies, in regiments, in brigades—the whole army. Forward, march, ye hosts of infidels and atheists, banners flying before, banners flying behind, banners inscribed with the words: "No God! No Christ! No Punishment! No Restraints! Down with the Bible! Do as You Please!" The sun turned into darkness!

Forward, march, ye great army of infidels and atheists! And first of all you will attack the churches. Away States she has more of her rights in Christendom than she has anywhere else.

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## NOTES ON SWINE.

### Hints on the Successful Breeding and Feeding of Hogs on the Farm.

The successful feeding of hogs depends to a considerable degree on giving them out according to size. A farmer can not successfully feed pigs weighing 50 pounds, with hogs ranging from two to three times that. I observed an illustration of this in a herd of 20 hogs belonging to a neighbor. Among the lot were two little scrawny, stunted fellows; that gave promise of anything but developing into profitable pigs. Left as they were it was very plain that they would amount to nothing. They were removed from among the others, and placed in a small yard by themselves. Their food had been mostly good, rich stuff; but the greatest point in their favor is that they had been by themselves, so that they could get their share of the feed, and without fear of being molested by some hog three or four times its size. I saw the pigs when they were separated and again recently. One would hardly know that they were the same pigs. The change they have been given, and the care bestowed, will pay the owner well. There are thousands of pigs in the country just like these, and all they want is a chance to pay the owner for their keep.

One great fault with many stock men is in trying to do too much. Sometimes a man makes a mistake in arguing that if he can do well with a few, he can do better with more. This may prove to be a fact, but many times it does not. A man should keep just as many hogs as he can keep and handle well. If a farmer gets beyond his limit he is apt to lessen his profits. I have in mind an instance where too many hogs have been handled for success. The result is that the stock has not been kept in as good condition as it should have been. It has not received the feed that it should have had; the housing and quarters have not been such as to insure the best disposition of the feed. It is a question which is the better way, to breed in line and to stick to one particular breed, or to cross. At a farmers' institute last winter, one state speaker, a well known farmer from New York, asserted that it did not pay to keep pure bred hogs for practical purposes. He said his experience had been that he was invariably better satisfied when he crossed his stock. He likes one side, or both, pure. By so breeding he believes that he gets better and more vigorous stock. The thoroughbred swine breeders present did not agree with him. They argued that while the first cross might do well, after that the chances were that the hogs would deteriorate into mongrels, and in the end be much less satisfactory than the pure bred hog. They believed that if the proper breed was selected for the purpose, the thoroughbred hog was much the best.—C. P. Reynolds, in Epitomist.

HERE AND THERE.

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